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Please acknowledge this letter by sending him a copy of the speech with a note to the effect that a reading of the entire text might give him a clearer idea of what I had in mind.

R. Helms

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April 15, 1971

Mr. Richard Helms
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Helms:

With some interest I read yesterday your request to the nation "to take it on faith" that the Central Intelligence Agency is made up of "honorable men devoted to the nation's service," and necessary to the survival of the democratic society.

I have no way of knowing, of course, how many such emotional, biased, and "on faith" judgments you accept, or the people who work for you, in the course of your daily business. But it strikes me as unbelievably naive that you should ask the people of the United States to believe all this without any substantiating argumentation.

In fact, we are now faced with terribly difficult decisions about national priorities. It is my view that the CIA should rank very low on those priorities, it being in my opinion hardly essential at all to the survival of a free society. I could be persuaded to change that opinion, but not "on faith." It's difficult for me to believe that any free people could support hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect employees, and hundreds of millions or billions of dollars -- naturally no one knows which -- "on faith." Indeed, if they were to do so, I doubt very much that they could remain free.

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